

Sheep, common symbol throughout the Bible, always need shepherd

Sheep are mentioned about 750 times in the Bible and are the most familiar biblical animal symbol. Keeper of the sheep is the first profession mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 4:2.)

Well-adapted to the nomadic life, sheep were a source of milk, wool, and, because they are considered clean animals, meat. The fat-tailed sheep of the Mideast were very dependent upon their shepherd, however. He knew where water was to be found on the arid grazing lands, and was willing to protect the sheep from wild animals that would devour them if they could. While any stranger could drive the sheep, only their shepherd could lead them.

As a result of the importance of sheep to Mideast life, the shepherd was held in high regard. The most well-known of all the Israelite kings was David, a shepherd who had come with shepherd's crook in hand to his anointing.

The parable of the Good Shepherd is particularly insightful.

"At night the sheep would be brought into an enclosure called a sheepfold which had high walls to keep anything or anyone from getting in. At the top of the walls were placed thorns which prevented wolves from leaping into the enclosure. Proper entrance was at the door only.

"Often several flocks were brought into one fold, and one shepherd, called a porter, would stand guard at the door during the night while the others would go home to rest. When the shepherds would return in the morning, they would be recognized by the doorkeeper, allowed to enter, and each call his own flock and lead them to pasture.

"The sheep knew the shepherd and trusted in him and would not follow a stranger. . . . If a stranger called, the sheep became nervous and startled and would not obey. . . .

"Sometimes a leopard or panther, when driven by hunger, would leap over the walls of the fold and into the midst of the frightened sheep. Then was the time that the nerve and heart of the shepherd was tried. A hireling, one who did not own the sheep, might at such a crisis flee from the danger. . . . Jesus' station as the Good Shepherd is complete in every detail." (Robert J. Matthews, *The Parables of Jesus*, pp. 75-76.)



Photo by J Malan Heslop

Modern shepherd leads flock and protects it from dangers as did his ancient counterparts.

Articles on this page may be used in conjunction with the gospel doctrine course of study.

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Sources: 1979 King James Bible; *Jesus the Christ* by Elder James E. Talmage; *The Life of Christ*, by Frederick W. Farrar; *Dictionary of the Bible*, Charles Scribner's Sons Publishers; *The Bible Almanac*, edited by James I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, and William White Jr.; *The Parables of Jesus*, by Robert J. Matthews.

Historical records now more accessible

*Department helps 'search of
spiritual roots' of members;
changes enhance security,
availability of documents*

BY R. SCOTT LLOYD
Church News staff writer

New measures aimed at making Church records and manuscripts more readily available to Church members and others doing research — while at the same time safeguarding those records — have been announced by the Church Historical Department.

Located in the east wing of the Church Office Building in Salt Lake City, the Library-Archives division of the department has taken steps to provide greater access and security to the Church's valuable historical collections.

"The changes will enable us gradually to make documents available to the public on a more effective basis," said Elder John K. Carmack of the First Quorum of the Seventy, managing director of the department.

"Great numbers of the Historical Department's current records will be cataloged and microfilmed over the next several years," he said. "Although confidentiality, respect for the sacred, and laws of privacy necessitate that some records will be closed to the public, we expect that most records will eventually be open to the public."

One of the department's objectives, Elder Carmack said, is "to build the faith of the members by helping them to search out their spiritual roots." The newly remodeled facilities, as well as other steps that will be taken, will make it easier to do that.

Richard E. Turley Jr., assistant managing director, said the department has undergone significant changes to improve the physical facilities over the past several months.

Leading experts in the operation of archives and research institutions have been consulted in making the changes that have been made.

The aim of the physical and procedural changes has been to bring the department's standard of operation closer to that of the most prestigious research institutions in the United States and other countries, Turley noted.

Seasoned researchers who have visited these institutions understand that if they intend to conduct depth research in original materials over an extended period of time, they may need an appointment and will be asked to register with the archives, state their research purpose, and sign a research agreement.

But the Library-Archives facilities do not exist solely for professional historians. Turley emphasized

